

First, I believe that the FCC plays a very important role in protecting the needs and interests for local communities. Local communities should be able to protect and have a say over the public rights-of-way in their communities. The rights-of-way belong to the public, not to every potential cable provider that exists. Local communities are charged with the responsibility of protecting the public's interests.

When an LFA negotiates with a cable provider through a franchise, it creates an opportunity of working with a provider to establish a larger service district. Local government officials listen to the people in their communities and understand the limitations that their constituents have. A franchise agreement can create additional services for a community. A cable provider wants to enter a market where they will immediately get the most "bang for their buck". That is understandable, they need to make a profit. But with a franchise agreement, it can be negotiated to broaden the service area to include new customers over a longer time period.

New entrants in the market are saying that a franchise agreement is a barrier to them. I disagree with this. Millennium and Comcast both offer cable service in the community that I live in and they have both successfully negotiated with local officials to serve their respective areas. If they can do it, then why can't the other companies do it? Comcast and Millennium and all the other cable providers that have already gone through the franchise agreement process have proved that it can be done and that it is not a barrier. If the franchise agreements were done away with, it would create a huge business advantage for the cable providers that are not currently in the market. It seems to me that this is their real reason for wanting to change what is already working.

As far as wondering what local communities do with the franchise fees that are paid, they use them to improve their roads. Local dollars have tightened over the last several years, not just for municipalities but for road commissions as well. The franchise fees help fund road projects that are badly needed in many communities.

I believe that the process currently in place is workable. I strongly support that the FCC protect local interests and needs.

Thank you.